

CASE STUDY REVISITED (Continued)

China's Population Policies

In contrast with India, China has made substantial progress in reducing its rate of growth. Between 1950 and 2000, the NIR was cut by 80 percent, from 3.6 to 0.7 per year. Since 2000, China has actually had a lower CBR than the United States.

The core of the Chinese government's family-planning program has been the One Child Policy, adopted in 1980. Under the One Child Policy, couples need a permit to have a child. Couples receive financial subsidies, a long maternity leave, better housing, and (in rural areas) more land if they agree to have just one child. The government prohibits marriage for men until they are 22 and women until they are 20. To further discourage births, people receive free contraceptives, abortions, and sterilizations. Rules are enforced by a government agency, the State Family Planning Commission.

A permit to have a second child is usually limited to couples in rural areas whose first child was a girl or who was handicapped, or if both parents are only children or ethnic minorities. Other couples with more than one child must pay a stiff fine, and job promotions may be denied. Some officials in rural villages maintain records of women's menstrual cycles to ensure that no unplanned babies are born.

As China moves toward a market economy in the twenty-first century and Chinese families become wealthier, the harsh rules in the One Child Policy have been relaxed, especially in urban areas. Clinics provide counseling on a wider range of family-planning



Promoting one-child policy in China. Rough translation of the sign: "Fewer births mean better births and lifelong happiness."

options. Instead of fines, Chinese couples wishing a second child pay a "family-planning fee" to cover the cost to the government of supporting the additional person. Fears that relaxing the One Child Policy would produce a large increase in the birth rate have been unfounded. After a quarter-century of intensive educational programs, as well as coercion, the Chinese people have accepted the benefits of family planning. As a result, China is likely to maintain a much lower NIR than India in the twenty-first century.

KEY TERMS

Agricultural density (p. 52)
Agricultural revolution (p. 58)
Arithmetic density (p. 51)
Census (p. 65)
Crude birth rate (CBR) (p. 53)
Crude death rate (CDR) (p. 53)
Demographic transition (p. 57)
Demography (p. 46)
Dependency ratio (p. 61)

Doubling time (p. 54)
Ecumene (p. 49)
Epidemiologic transition (p. 72)
Epidemiology (p. 72)
Industrial Revolution (p. 58)
Infant mortality rate (IMR) (p. 55)
Life expectancy (p. 57)
Medical revolution (p. 59)

Natural increase rate (NIR) (p. 53)
Overpopulation (p. 46)
Pandemic (p. 72)
Physiological density (p. 51)
Population pyramid (p. 61)
Sex ratio (p. 62)
Total fertility rate (TFR) (p. 54)
Zero population growth (ZPG) (p. 59)

THINKING GEOGRAPHICALLY

- As discussed in the Contemporary Geographic Tools box, the current method of counting a country's population by requiring every household to complete a census form once every 10 years has been severely criticized as inaccurate. The census allegedly fails to count people who cannot read the form or who do not wish to be found. This undercounting produces a geographic bias, because people who are missed are more likely to live in inner cities, remote rural areas, or communities that attract a relatively high number of recent immigrants. Given the availability of reliable statistical tests, should the current method of trying to count 100 percent of the population be replaced by a survey of a carefully drawn sample of the population, as is done with political polling and consumer preferences? Why or why not?
- Scientists disagree about the effects of high density on human behavior. Some laboratory tests have shown that rats display evidence of increased aggressiveness, competition, and violence when very large numbers of them are placed in a box. Is there any evidence that very high density causes humans to behave especially aggressively or violently? Discuss.
- Paul and Anne Ehrlich argue in *The Population Explosion* (1990) that a baby born in an MDC such as the United States poses a grave

threat to global overpopulation than a baby born in an LDC. The reason is that people in MDCs place much higher demands on the world's supply of energy, food, and other limited resources. Do you agree with this view? Why?

4. Members of the baby-boom generation—people born between 1946 and 1964—constitute nearly one-third of the U.S. population. Baby boomers have received more education than their parents, and women are more likely to enter the labor force. They have delayed marriage and parenthood and have fewer children com-

pared to their parents. They are more likely to divorce, to bear children while unmarried, and to cohabit. As they grow older, what impact will baby boomers have on the American population in the twenty-first century?

5. What policies should governments in MDCs pursue to reduce global population growth? If an MDC provides funds and advice to promote family planning, does it gain the right to tell developing countries how to spend the funds and how to use the expertise? Explain your answer.

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